



Rep. Dave Mastin **2004 Legislative Report**

*To citizens
of the
16th District*

Dear Friends,

I hope you and your families are off to a great start this year.

Last session, we put a balanced state budget and reforms in place that will **improve our state's job climate**. In the face of a \$2.7 billion deficit, we adopted a bipartisan budget that required **no new general taxes and preserved core services**. Much like families and small employers, state government had to make hard financial decisions during tough economic times.

In 2004, we are continuing to find ways to move Washington's economy and classrooms forward. There is more we can and must do to **bring jobs and prosperity to our state's working families and enhance our education system**. We've been discussing these ideas and more in the legislative session that began on January 12.

As always, I welcome your input on legislative issues. I'm also happy to assist you in your dealings with state government. My job is to serve and represent you, so **please contact me if I am able to be of assistance in any way**.

You can reach me during session by leaving a message on the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000, or by e-mail at mastin_da@leg.wa.gov. If you're in Olympia the next couple of months, be sure to stop by my office (Module 1 on the Capitol Campus) and say "hi."

Sincerely,

Dave Mastin

Dave Mastin
State Representative



Rep. Dave Mastin

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1-800-562-6000

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1-800-635-9993



**District office
closed during
session**

In order to better serve local citizens and provide access to their legislators I, along with Rep. Bill Grant and Sen. Mike Hewitt, share a 16th District legislative office. However, this office is closed when we are in session in Olympia. **It will reopen in late March**. When open, this office is staffed by Maureen Walsh, my legislative assistant, and is located at:

Walla Walla District Office
26 East Main Street #5
Walla Walla, WA 99362
(509) 527-4111

16th District Legislative Report

Transportation

Last year, we passed a five cent gas tax that in time will go a long way in helping the transportation problems of our roadways. While I wish we had more reforms attached to this tax, I'm encouraged a viable funding source has been established.

My seatmate Bill Grant, Sen. Mike Hewitt and I continue to do all we can in Olympia to support the expansion of U.S. Highway 12 to four-lanes from Burbank to Walla Walla. There is reason for optimism and I believe this project will eventually move forward. I hope to have confirmation by the next time I send you a newsletter.

There is no doubt that the expansion of this important highway will create safer conditions for those who travel on it. We've seen too many accidents and fatalities on this highway over the years and something must be done now.

Widening U.S. Highway 12 will also help the economical vitality of our region. As you know, one of the most important considerations for any business looking to locate into an area is the availability of a four-lane highway to efficiently deliver and receive goods.

I want to thank all those – including public and private organizations — who have worked tirelessly on this issue at the local and state level.



Continuing on the right path

Our state's economy is still struggling. With the U.S. economy showing signs of revival and sustained growth, we must be sure all of Washington is positioned for the same recovery.

Your state representatives and senator have been working with a coalition of employers and labor groups to adopt reforms that will help restore our economy and bring jobs to our state.

Fiscal responsibility and increasing our competitiveness are needed this year and beyond to ensure Washington shares in any positive economic momentum. It's time we start attracting new employers to the region while making sure we retain the ones we already have.

The Boeing 7E7 decision last December was a step in the right direction for the whole state, but surely there's more we can do for small job-providers too.

Fiscal responsibility

Fiscal responsibility for our state means the Legislature should follow the same sound principles of last year and apply them this year to the supplemental budget. This means living within our means with no general tax increases. We must ensure we end this biennium with a budget that won't require tax increases or reductions in core state services next year. This will require difficult decisions and debates on our projected budget, but I'm confident legislators are up to the task.

Preparing our children for the future

K-12 education

As I work on K-12 education issues in 2004, I will continue to be guided by the principle that local communities have **control of and accountability for their schools**. Teachers and parents have told me this is what they want and expect.



I'm encouraged with the ideas being exchanged this session. Here's an issue I recently supported:

- Clearly defining the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) and graduation requirements.

I voted "yes" on House Bill 2195 because it clearly defines graduation requirements and what is expected from students, teachers and parents with respect to the WASL.



To citizens of the 16th District

Local colleges receive boost from capital budget

The 2003 capital budget includes nearly \$14 million for improvements to the Columbia Basin College and Walla Walla Community College. This budget, which covers new construction, purchases and renovations of state facilities, includes a \$6 million renovation of the "T" Building at Columbia Basin College and \$7.3 million for the Health Science Facility at Walla Walla Community College. An additional \$573,000 is appropriated for the Basic Skills Computer Lab on the Walla Walla campus.

I'm pleased to see these **investments in our local college campuses**. Our colleges have done a great job of responding to the needs of people entering and re-entering the workforce.

Water policy reforms

Our water resources, already stretched between the needs of fish, agriculture, economic development, and hydropower generation, have been

entangled by inconsistent and conflicting statutes and regulations.

In 2003, we adopted legislation to improve **flexibility for communities** that have run into bureaucratic obstacles when trying to accommodate economic development and residential needs.

Modernizing our water relinquishment statutes

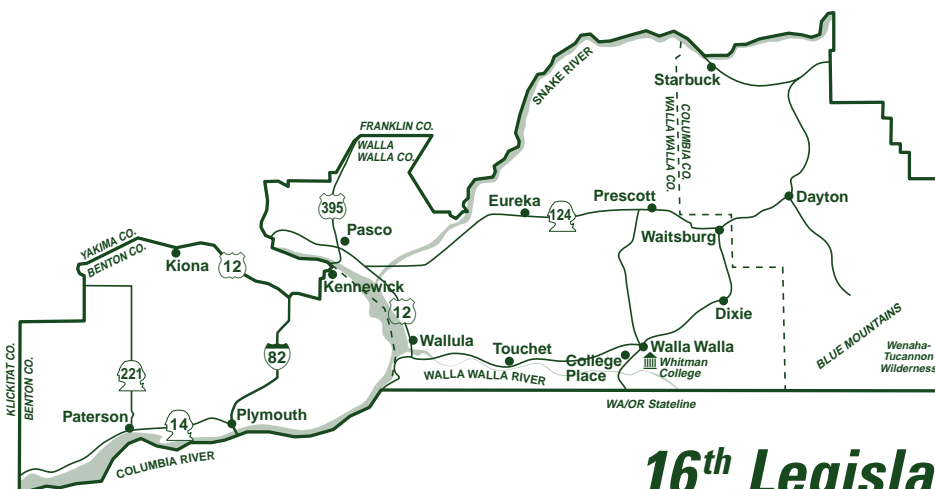
Water right holders need relief from the present laws regarding the relinquishment of a water right. If water right holders do not use the full quantity of their water right within a five year consecutive period of time, the water right or that portion which was not used is relin-



Rep. Mastin expresses his thoughts on the capital budget.

quished back to the state. Water right users who have practiced good conservation measures by using more efficient water delivery systems or even changing the type of crops grown on their land may be losing a portion of their water rights.

I support legislation that recognizes past and future conservation efforts and removes obstacles for those wishing to use water more efficiently.



16th Legislative District

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Health care systems on life support

Doctors and other health care providers are facing an uphill battle to maintain and establish services in Washington, particularly in rural areas.

Health care must also be **affordable and accessible** to everyone. This is not the case in our state. Instead, health care costs are skyrocketing and availability of coverage is being limited. **This has created a crisis we must address immediately.**

One area the Legislature should address is liability reform. While tort reform is not the only thing driving health insurance costs up, it's playing a part. We must address these negative trends by replacing the current tort



system with a **fair, predictable and timely liability process**. Everyone will benefit from these reasonable and long-overdue reforms:

- Joint and several liability reform
- Tort judgment interest rate
- Cap on non-economic damages
- Evidence of collateral sources of payment

Health care insurance reforms

I believe we need a health care system that allows more options. Health care plans need more choice and flexibility – perhaps one with major medical coverage and other components tailored to that individual's or family's needs.

We also need other **insurance reforms** to help control costs. This will **enable more employers** to provide health care coverage for their employees. Other health care areas of focus for the Legislature must be:

- Small-group insurance reform
- Long term care financing
- Health care workforce development
- Childhood fitness and nutrition

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